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THE THREEFOLD FIRE.

[A lecture delivered by Bro. Arthur Richardson on 31st October 1897 in Framji Cowasji Institute before the Parsi Community]

FIRE, from whatever aspect we regard it, has from earliest times appealed to man as the most important and far reaching of all the phenomena of the material world. Terrestrial fire is exclusively the property of man, that is to say he alone in the animal creation knows how to make fire, the lower animals do but fear and dread it or at best rush madly into its destructive flames ; but man has learnt to use and to control it, it cooks his food, and is his sun by night ; and in the present day, as the great steam producer, it is the mainspring of machinery, the source of power and wealth. But in the past it was more than man's servant, it was to him the type of the Divine, and if we look down the vistas of the ages we see through the dark night of the long past, the light of sacred fires on every altar, a burning lamp in every shrine. Fire was the symbol used by the Rishis and Sages, to teach man of the spiritual fire within ; through it They led him by gradual stages to look for the First Cause behind the manifested world.

Here then is a vast subject open before us, which may be studied from so many points of view that in a single lecture it would be impossible even to touch them all. But in its many aspects we may conveniently group fire under three heads, *viz.*—the physical, symbolical, and spiritual fire, and to-night I shall endeavour to shew the connection of the first two to the third—the spiritual fire, and the relation it bears to man, as illustrated in the Zoroastrian religion.

Starting with physical fire, the fire familiar to us in the burning wood, the lamp flame, or the more remote solar fire, let us first enquire how far the mystery with which it was once regarded has been cleared away by modern science. How far is this the most material form of fire,

which was regarded by the ancients as the highest agent in nature and worthy of their worship, how far is this fire fully understood by the philosophers of the present day.

To the scientist fire is the manifestation in matter of *energy* in its threefold nature, as *chemical action*, *light*, and *heat*. But even the first question which arises, as to the chemical changes which give rise to fire, has not yet been fully answered. For more than a century the study of these changes has occupied the attention of chemists, yet to-day they are brought face to face with problems which the keenest intellects have so far failed to solve, for as the external form of flame is constantly changing—as we see if we watch the flickering tongues of fire upon the hearth—so in the body of the flame the constituents are ever passing from shape to shape. Here molecules are battered into atoms, and these again build themselves into fresh combinations, to be again ground to dust in this incessant clashing of the particles in the process called chemical action, on which the phenomena of fire depends.

Fire is essentially the source of light and heat, yet what is light? Here again how little do we know, or rather how much is yet to be known, of those ripples in the shoreless ocean of the ether which, breaking on the retina of our eye gives us the sensation we call light, and its relation to those other waves in the ether, the electrical waves, of which we hear so much in the present day. Truly there is no end to knowledge for as the patient worker—through his incessant knocking—compels reluctant Nature to open one by one her secret doors, she does but give him glimpses of vaster and vaster tracts of country yet to be explored, so that he may well say with Newton—the greatest and most humble of nature's priests—“I seem to have been only like a boy, playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

Heat is the third great attribute of fire. It is recognized by the scientist as the cause of that ceaseless motion of the particles of which all matter is composed. Heat is the energy which gives rise to this motion—this life—in what is commonly called ‘dead, or inanimate matter’; only when all heat is withdrawn does this motion cease; only when a body is *absolutely cold* can it be called truly dead.

Fire then, whether studied on the large scale in the sun, or in miniature in a candle flame, is the field of manifestation

of these three great agents of nature,—chemical action, light, and heat, the great builders, preservers, and destroyers of our system, the prime movers of the world. Ages ago Heraclitus seems to have arrived at the same conclusion for he declares "Fire is the great cause, and all things are in a perpetual flux."

Thus we see that though science has done much to add fresh facts to our knowledge regarding fire, it still holds its own as the highest and most far-reaching of the phenomena of nature, indeed we might almost say that, from a scientific point of view, it is the first cause on the material plane.

The ancients then were not so far behind when they made it head the list of the four elements, earth, water, air and fire. These are the four types corresponding to the three states of matter recognized to-day as the solid, liquid and gas and the fourth corresponding with fire called in modern language energy. The composition of the earth is known, water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen, and air has many times been analyzed, but fire or energy is of a subtler nature, and has no composition in this sense, we may call it the spirit that ensouls matter. Already, then we see that on this physical plane, fire or energy is essentially different from the other three; already the ground of the material, and ponderable is slipping from under our feet, already we have passed from one reality matter—that can be analyzed and weighed—to another and equally real 'something' fire or energy which is not matter and has neither composition nor weight. This is that protean fire which has no properties yet gives the properties to matter, is nowhere yet everywhere, even in the flint struck by the steel; is unknown except in matter, yet without it matter would cease to exist. But we must leave these 'hard facts' of science and pass on to the consideration of fire in its symbolical aspect.

Fire is defined by Madame Blavatsky as "the most unadulterated reflection in heaven and earth of the One Flame, it is life and death the beginning and the end of all natural things." Thus though physical fire is, to us, so great an agent, it is but the representative of still mightier forces acting on higher planes, to be traced back at last to that One Flame whose reflection it is in this our physical world. What wonder then if fire, so unlike anything else in nature, should have seemed to man in every age either itself divine, or a symbol worthy of the highest reverence in his ceremonial worship. First to the savage taught by nature, it must have appealed as a thing terrible and revengeful as he watched

it raging in all its fury through the forest, or bursting in volcanic flames from the mountain, or breaking from the skies in the lightning flash. What wonder if infant humanity should see here a very god to be appeased with offerings and with prayers. Then passing up the scale of human evolution we find man's growing intellect leading him from the concrete to the abstract, for under the influence of his great Teachers, those who laid the foundations of religion in the past, he learns that what is seen is temporal, that behind the phenomenal lies the Cause, the Eternal. But how shall these great Ones describe to him that for which no words exist, how can spirit be expressed in terms of matter ; it is here where words with their limited and specific meanings fail, that symbology comes in, and of all symbols used to convey the idea of the Supreme Being the most expressive is that of fire.

In almost every religion Fire is used to clothe this same thought. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, Osiris Ani is described as 'the Fire the son of Fire.' To the Hindu, Brahman the highest God is Fire. To the Zoroastrian, Ahuramazda the creator is worshipped as Fire. The Jews worship their God as a Pillar of Fire and as a Consuming Fire. To the Christians the Holy Ghost the Comforter, appeared as tongues of Fire, as it descended on the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

Fire is the common symbol round which all the nations of the world may gather, perhaps the only symbol about which we are all at one.

Let us then consider more closely the symbolical significance of fire as presented to us in the Zoroastrian religion, that religion which above all others has, from earliest times, adopted fire as its special symbol, the garment as it were in which to clothe its teachings as to the Divine Essence in relation to man.

Taking the three main fires of the Parsi scriptures, *viz.* Mithra, the Sun-fire, Âtash Dádgáh the house-hold fire, and Âtash Behrám the altar fire we see that Mithra, is the symbol or reflection on the physical plane of Ahuramazda. For the sun is the ruler and progenitor of our system, the cosmic fire, and source of all terrestrial fire ; his warmth gives life and motion to all matter ; his light quickens and sustains the vegetable life in trees and plant ; his sunshine (the aggregate of the solar rays) calls forth the physical life in those still higher organisms the animals and men. So Ahuramazda, the spiritual Sun, is the creator of the sun and of the every universe ; He is the cosmic spiritual fire ;

the source of life in the sun and indirectly of that of the world itself. But more than this Ahuramazda is the source of that still higher life, the spiritual fire in man. He is the Lord spoken of in the Hebrew scriptures.—

“Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: who makest the clouds his chariot: who walketh on the wings of the wind: who makest his angels spirits; his ministers a flame of fire” (Psalm CIV). Now the more carefully we study the relation of the sun to our earth the more adequately does he tipify the relation of his great prototype—Ahura or God, the Spiritual Sun to man. Thus for example if we take Mithra the physical sun in relation to the vegetable world—so often referred to in the *Mihir Yasht* as “the Lord of wide pastures, sleepless and ever awake” we find from modern science, that he supplies the energy necessary for the growth of the plant creation. For the sunlight that falls upon our earth is as it were a portion of the sun’s energy—his life—which is itself built into the leaves and boughs and trunks of the forest trees, and forms the plants and blades of grass. Thus sunlight is literally a trust vested by the sun in the vegetable kingdom to be held so long as there is growth. But when a tree is cut down and burnt it gives back the equivalent of the light it absorbed in life, for the flames and heat of its combustion represent in a very real sense, the solar energy stored and hidden in it whilst growing and which it now gives out again.

Farther we know that a portion of the sun’s energy lies deep in the earth invested in the coal. For the giant palms and tropical vegetation that grew upon the earth and drunk in the sunlight that shone on them thousands of years ago, fell in the course of time and were gradually buried and fossilized, and now are coal; to-day the coal in burning gives out again in its flames the sunlight it received in the remote past.

But the facts which we are gradually discovering in the laboratory as to the relation of the sun to the vegetable world, are but the physical expression of a fundamental Spiritual Truth, which has been reiterated from earliest times, and forms the central doctrine of all the world religions, *viz.*—that as the plant contains a portion of the sun’s life stored within it which can be called forth as fire, so man contains within himself a portion of that Spiritual Sun, for the Divine ray has passed into all mankind. Thus Ahura like the physical sun

gives and intrusts a portion of His divine essence to His highest creation, this gift is the soul in man, and though in him it may lie buried like the fire in the coal, though man's heart—like the coal—may seem dark and cold and overlaid with the earth of selfishness and vice, yet when the match is once applied, when the flinty heart is struck with the hard steel of conviction, then the sparks flash forth and prove that there is a fire within, then man becomes a *living* soul. It is this principle in man, this latent fire present in every one, that makes it possible for him to rise above a merely intellectual beast. It is this fire which when called forth, transforms man the animal, the slave of his desires, into Man the conqueror who vanquishes his lower nature. Thus the prophets and great teachers in all times, recognizing this, have appealed to man confident that their appeal would not be in vain, and have ever sought to draw forth the Divine Principle already there, and to stir the smouldering fire into a blaze.

But there is another and recently ascertained fact with regard to the sun which seems to have been fully recognized by Zoroaster, though long ago forgotten by the Parsis to be now rediscovered by scientists in the West. Sunlight is found to be the great destroyer of disease and malignant microbes on the earth. It purifies stagnant waters, and keep the rivers fresh, in fact science proclaims to-day that the sun is the most powerful disinfectant and sanitary agent in nature. But what do your own scriptures say on the matter? A portion of the Khorshed Yasht when translated runs thus—

“We sacrifice to the bright undying swift-horsed sun. And when the sun rises up the earth made by Ahura becomes clean. The running waters become clean. The standing waters become clean. All the holy creatures of the good spirit become clean. He who sacrifices to the undying shining swift-horsed Sun to withstand darkness, to withstand death that creeps unseen, offers it up to Ahuramazda, offers it up to the Ameshaspentas, offers it up to his own soul.”

Thus we see it clearly stated that the sun purifies the earth and waters, destroys the devas or microbes, withstands death and dispels disease. Religion is thus justified by science though the latter scoffs at the old world lore.

How full of meaning is this passage when we remember that the physical sun is a type of the Spiritual Sun for if science proves that what is here stated is true for the physical plane, much more does experience shew it

to be so in the spiritual life. For when you open your shutters in the morning you are reminded that as the physical sun dispels darkness and disease, so also if you open the doors of your hearts and let the beams of the spiritual sun shine in upon your soul, then the soul given you by Ahura will become clean ; the thoughts (born of the astral plane symbolized by water) will be made clean ; that you may withstand the Devas (the evil thought forms and elementals) that creep in spiritual darkness ; so shall you offer sacrifices to Ahura ; so shall you draw down the help of the Holy Ones, your guardian angels ; and nourish with spiritual food your own soul.

This brings us to the second fire the house-hold Fire. Here we see that the wood that perpetually burns on every hearth, gives out in its flames the sun light it received and makes it felt to all in the home, thus it proclaims in language clearer than words—"I am the symbol of the Spiritual Fire within you." Then as the Parsi feeds his householed fire, as he fans it into flame, it strikes home with the question. "Is the spiritual fire, the Higher Life, within you smouldering and neglected, or is it blazing and making itself felt by all around in unselfish deeds, kind words, and noble thoughts?" Thus did your Prophet speak in symbols so unmistakable in their simple truth that even "he who runs may read," yet so deep in their meaning that they pierce deep down to the very essence of things to the springs of conduct from whence our motive flow.

Lastly there is the Temple Fire, that fire lit as you know from many sources from the flames of the mountain, the lightning, and the tree, from the fires of the blacksmith and the other trades, from the household fires, and in old times from the fires of warrior and king. All these together blend upon the altar in one united fire the A'tash Behram. Here then is a great symbol whose meaning we will all do well to bear in mind. For as the external differences symbolized by the many fires, are consumed upon the altar in virtue of this common property of flame, so man whether he be rich or poor, high or low, whatever his external appearance, is united to his fellow men in virtue of this principle he shares with all,—the highest thing in every one—the Spiritual fire. It is the presence of this God within that when once recognized by any man consumes all differences in its flames, and links him in the bond of brotherhood with all mankind.

But just as wet wood will not burn but only smokes and

smoulders, so separateness and selfishness in us smothers the spiritual flame, and keeps us from the rest. Therefore the worshipper at the temple, leaving his shoes the mud of earth behind, casting aside for the time at any rate the selfishness and wrangling of the outer world, draws near the altar with a humble heart and offers there dry sandal wood blending his flame with other flame in token of the united aspiration rising in unison from many hearts in one spiritual flame, a worthy sacrifice to the Most High.

Here then we recognize in the Zoroastrian scriptures the basic principles, common to all the world faiths set forth in the grand and luminous symbology of fire. First the Spiritual sun, the father and source of all typified by the physical sun; then the ray from the One implanted in the heart of every man, making mankind the sons of God, and symbolized by the burning wood; and lastly there is the blending of the many rays in one finding expression in brotherhood and unity, of which the Altar fire is an ever present witness. These are ideas which may serve for *ideals* to be aimed at in the every day life of the world; principles which the Zoroastrian religion, if rightly understood, seems to emphasize with no uncertain sound, a Religion which constituting it cannot fail to meet the wants of mankind in the present day as it has done in the past.

MAN'S QUEST FOR GOD.

MAN has for ages fashioned theories about God, theories ranging from the fetich of the savage to the loftiest dream of the mystic, the profoundest conception of the philosopher. Omitting fetichism we may class the theories of living interest under Monotheism and Pantheism, including under the first the "Theism" of modern thought, and under the latter the scientific Polytheism of the great eastern religions.

In the West, of late years, many of the more thoughtful and highly educated people—repelled by the crude Theism of the masses and by the unintelligent theories of the divine Existence presented by popular Christianity—have taken refuge in agnosticism, a confession of intellectual despair. Feeling that knowledge about God was unattainable, that "no thoroughfare" was written above every path along which humanity was groping after God, these people, truthful and

sincere, thoughtful and candid, have preferred the modesty of silence to the insolence of disbelief. They elected to starve the heart rather than to stifle the intellect, and consoled themselves with the undeniable facts of this world for what they considered as the unverifiable fancies about another. But the ineradicable longings of the human heart for the knowledge of God will sooner or later overthrow any edifice of agnosticism that the intellect can rear, and agnosticism can never be more than the temporary refuge of the wearied intellect, where it may gather strength and courage to start on another stage of the eternal quest.

The popular Christian conceptions of God are dominated by the ideas inherited from exoteric Hebraism, by the crude anthropomorphism of its published scriptures. The Jehovah, or Jahveh, of the Hebrews, imaged as a "man of war," with human passions and superhuman powers, walking in the garden, coming down from heaven to look at a tower, descending to a mountain to proclaim his law, demanding the slaughter of countless animals in sacrifice, declaring himself to be jealous, angry, revengeful, remembering offences generation after generation—this deity of an undeveloped race has been largely instrumental in forming the God-idea of the uneducated in Christendom.

The contact of the Hebrews with Chaldean thought added dignity and grandeur to their idea of God, and their post-Babylonian writings show a nobler view of the divine Being. The God of the prophets, as of the later Isaiah and of Micah, is a grandiose and inspiring conception, a Power that makes for righteousness. This remodelled thought about God was softened into the ideal of a perfect man of superhuman greatness, the Father and Lover of men, in the later rabbinical teachings and in the Jewish-Christian scriptures. The limitations were removed while the ideal humanity was left, power remained without cruelty and justice without severity. But in Christian theology such as we find in Tertullian, and less nakedly in other Fathers of the Church, the savagery of the earlier Hebrews reappears, and the gracious lineaments of "the Father" vanish under the fierce mask of Jahveh, again the vengeful God whelming his foes under fire-floods. None the less the nobler conception remained as an encouragement and inspiration, gradually becoming focussed in the person of the Son, the Divine Man, supreme in tenderness and compassion. From the troublous times of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, enough emerged to satisfy the heart, but not

enough to content the intellect; the conception of God was left vague, hazy, and somewhat terrifying, while the object presented for adoration, on which all love was lavished, was the Son, self-sacrificed, redeeming, surrendering power to pity—a figure that drew all hearts, that satisfied all aspirations, the Man divine enough for worship, the God human enough for love.

Among ourselves, uprising from the Unitarian school of Christians, there is a somewhat curious but most instructive sect, that of modern Theism, represented by Theodore Parker, Francis Newman, Frances Power Cobbe, and Charler Voysey. These assert and worship “the Father,” purging away from that conception all that is harsh, unlovely, stern, in the view of popular Christianity, adorning it with all the heart-compelling attributes of the perfect man, turning, in fact, the second Person of the orthodox Trinity into the first, and investing the now wholly divine Figure with all the far-reaching qualities of deity. The Trinity disappears, the Unmanifested is ignored, and a vast superhuman personal God is regarded as at once the Father of spirits and the all-sustaining, self-existent Life, beyond whom, embracing and pervading all, naught else exists. He is at once the “One without a second,” and the personal Lover and Friend of man. If all the harsher traits were expunged from the God of Muhammed, and the fierce wrath were replaced with an immeasurable compassion, then, for the unity and personality of the Supreme, Theism and Islâm might link hands.

Says Theodore Parker: “The mode of man’s finite being is of necessity a receiving: of God’s infinite being, of necessity a giving. You cannot conceive of any finite thing existing without God, the infinite ground and basis thereof; nor of God existing without something. God is the necessary logical condition of a world, its necessitating cause; a world, the necessary logical condition of God, his necessitated consequence. . . . It is the idea of God as infinite—perfectly powerful, wise, just, loving, holy—absolute being, with no limitation. . . . His Here conterminous with the all of space, his Now coeval with the all of time.” (*Ten Sermons on Religion*, pp. 338, 339, 341.)

“The Soul contemplates God as a being who unites all these various modes of action, as manifested in truth, in right, and in love. It apprehends him, not merely as absolute truth, absolute right, and absolute love alone, but as all these unified into one complete and perfect being, the Infinite God. He is the absolute object of the soul, and corresponds thereto, as

truth to the mind, as justice to the conscience, as love to the heart." (*Ibid.* p. 9.)

As intellect developed and knowledge increased, science began to undermine the popular theory about God, and to see inconsistencies in the loftier thought. The widening out of the universe, the opening of immeasurable depths of space, the glimpses of far suns which dwarfed our own to rushlight, the whirling infinities of innumerable systems, the gold-dust sprinkled afar that was found to be galaxies of stars—each star a sun, each sun the centre of its circling worlds—the faint mist-wreaths that turned out to be uncounted hordes of luminaries on the edges of new fields of being, the unplumbed profundities of living things in ever-diminishing minuteness presented by our own globe, the infinities of life on the one hand too small for scanning, the infinities of life on the other hand too vast for measuring—from all this the brain staggered back, dizzied and confounded, overturning, as it reeled against it, the idol of an extracosmic God. Jean Paul Richter's dream became a reality, and void pealed back to void, orb tossed back to orb, the mournful cry, "Children, you have no Father." But when the intellect was crushed beneath immensities, the soul uprose in indomitable and admirable audacity, flinging out into the seeming void its ineradicable belief in the Life whence it sprang, to find the void a plenum, Deity immanent throughout "empty" space.

Then Pantheism unveiled its all-alluring beauties, and the intercosmic God shone forth dispelling all the clouds of doubt and fear, and turning into gardens of delight the erstwhile desert sands. Had it come in its native garb, it would have won all to itself, but to intellectual Europe the most generally recognised exponent of this theory was Spinoza, and while his strong thought fascinated and compelled the intelligence, presented—as it often was by opponents—without the ethic based on it, it left the spirit starving and the heart a-cold. The idea got abroad that "Pantheism" was a chill and stern philosophy, that its God was unconscious, inaccessible—the "Father" had disappeared. "God is a being absolutely infinite; a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses His eternal and infinite essence." (*Ethics*, Bk. I. Definition 6.) Of these attributes man knows but two, extension and mind or will. Mr. Froude in his *Short Studies*—from which the quotation from Spinoza is borrowed—says, summarising Spinoza's views, that God "is not a personal being, existing apart from the universe; but Himself in His own reality, He is expressed

in the universe, which is His living garment." (P. 360.) All things exist as He willed them to be, evil is not positive, there is "an infinite gradation in created things," "all in their way obedient." Two things in Spinoza have repelled the emotional—his steady logical destructive analysis and calm acceptance of its results, and his theory of necessitarianism. The latter has been held fatal to morals, the former to devotion. Yet Spinoza was so far from being incapable of strenuous devotion that he was described by his enemies as "a God-intoxicated man," and his lofty, serene virtue and calm acquiescence in the law of life as he saw it were in themselves evidences of the fine fibre of his soul.

Western thought is swinging between Pantheism and a more or less coherent Theism; at one time the thinker is driven to accept the one infinite self-existent Substance, impersonal, all-pervasive, and his emotions are chilled and paralysed; at another he expands in love and devotion to a consciously touched Father, and is checked by the logical contradictions in which he finds himself entangled. The compulsion of the intellect, the longings of the heart, come out strongly in the poet who voiced so often the restless mentality of his age:

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?
Dark is the world to thee: thyself art the reason why;
For is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel "I am I"? . . .
Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

(Tennyson's Works, p. 277. Kegan Paul & Co. ed.)

In all western forms of Pantheism there is a common lack—the lack of the great ladder of beings stretching from the grain of dust to the loftiest spirit. All apparently end with man, and see in him the highest expression of God, while man, feeling his own littleness in the immensity of the God-pervaded universe, stretches out groping hands to find his elder brothers, the outcome of evolution in past eternities, in other realms of space. If none such exist, if an immeasurable past has brought as fruit no mighty beings, far above his pigmy growth as he above the mote in the sun-ray, must not all universes be but an ebb and flow of the ocean, in which he is but a bubble in the foam of a breaking wave? He sees himself within measurable distance of his end, for why should his world bear a harvest for eternity when other like worlds have gone down into the past and no fruit of them

remains? The failure of the dead universes to produce containing lives, exhibiting loftier powers, appears to prophesy for him an evolution equally limited, and to presage his approaching doom. Chilled by the dank vapours of annihilation he flies back into the warmer regions of faith, and submits to any outrage on reason rather than stifle the ever-recurring conviction, "Not all of me shall die."

Here steps forward to his rescue eastern Pantheism, satisfying alike to head and heart, impregnable intellectually as that of Spinoza, but solving the problems of life as no philosopher can do who reduces intelligent beings to the narrow compass of man and the lower kingdoms of nature. Other worlds in disappearing have left the lives evolved by their aid, and beings greater than man, intelligences deeper, wider, loftier, crowd the realms of space, soaring to unimaginable grandeur, angels of worlds, Gods of countless systems, rising ever higher, with consciousness expanded to embrace vaster areas, offering countless objects for worship, extending loving hands to help, the Fathers and Mothers of the systems that roll in space—all that heart can long for all that aspiration can soar to, all that reason can demand. Through each pours out the One Life, in each is expressed some marvel of the else unintelligible Glory; They reveal part of THAT which eludes all grasping in totality; some so mighty and so vast that They sustain a universe, some so individually tender that a child, unafraid, might nestle on Their breast.

In eastern Pantheism the One and the Many are distinguished in thought, while the fundamental unity—the Many being but rays of the One, manifested centres of consciousness, channels of the One, each in His measure—is never left out of sight. "He verily is all the Gods." "They call Him Indra, Mittra, Varuna and Agni." "He who is Brahma, who is Indra and Prajâpati, is all these Gods." (*Brihadâranyakopanishad*, quotations from the Shruti, in Commentary on the Fourth Brâhmaṇa, chap. i.) The Gods truly live as separate intelligences, but they no more mar the divine unity than does the existence of men as separate intelligences. Polytheism adds to the philosophy of Pantheism the religious element needed for spiritual evolution, but Gods and men, as well as all other parts of the universe, live and move and have their being in the One. THAT is the One without a second, incognisable, infinite, the causeless Cause of Being. "It is beyond the range and reach of thought—in the words of the *Mândûkya*, 'unthinkable and unspeakable.'" (*The Secret Doctrine*, i. 42.)

As salt in water, as butter in milk, the One Life is in all, invisible to eye, but immanent in all. The symbol of THAT to our conditioned intelligence is the supernal Trinity, Brahman in His three-fold aspect, God in manifestation, the highest point to which our thought can soar. He is the One Self, and veils Himself in innumerable forms, amid which the "Seven Spirits" take the loftiest place, and below Them many divine Beings, grouped in threes and sevens, according to Their functions in any given department of the kosmos, and in many other groupings, familiar in world-scriptures, and reducible to the same fundamental complex units.* A three and a seven form the Rulers, it would seem, in many systems of our kosmos. Below These are vast hierarchies of graduated intelligences, guiding the kosmic order, superintending its various departments, Gods of the seven great Elements the permutations and combinations of which make up the material side of nature—the three gunas (qualities) and the seven tattvas (elements) composing this material side as the three Logoi and the seven Spirits compose the life or energy side.

When we think of the Logos as the self of all, we think of Him as one, as the Lord of the world and of men. The highest Logos, we have heard, is One who has climbed the ladder of Being until he can hold His centre of consciousness, Himself unparalysed, fully conscious amid the mighty vibrations of the Great Life. Coming into manifestation He limits Himself to be the channel of that One Life to a universe ; He has been man in an incalculable past, and has risen through every phase of super-human being to the highest level of conditioned existence. Hence He can condition Himself at any point of such existence. When for some gracious purpose He thus takes on the human condition and is born into one of His worlds, we call Him an Avatâra, a God-man. He lives again on some globe as man, but the glory of Deity lightens through Him, and He is Emmanuel, God-with-us. To such a one, or to any spiritual intelligence, men of all grades of head and heart can turn in worship, in love, in trust ;

* Thus in a seven the one is placed in the centre and six are round it, this doubled, the centres coinciding, gives twelve round the one; hence all multiples of twelve. Again, the three taken as a centre with the seven round it yield the ten, the decade (our system perfected at its close), and out of this arise multiples of ten. Or, this central three being regarded as a suit, eight represents the one and seven, and multiples of eight result. Further groupings appear when each of these threes or sixes, or sevens, is taken as double, positive-negative, male-female, etc. But this number system in all its ramifications is too big to deal with here.

from all such beings, men can ask for aid, counsel or guidance. For a very lowly-developed type of man an intelligence of a comparatively low grade may be the most effective "God"; the untrained brain cannot grasp the vast idea of an intracosmic God, all-pervasive, all sustaining; the concept bewilders the intellect and chills the heart. Yet without love and trust and worship the spiritual nature cannot awake, cannot develop; it is not the object of worship but the attitude of the worshipper, that rouses the emotions which stimulate spiritual growth. God is the life of every object, and it is He that is worshipped in each, not the outer form that is His veil. He is the all-attractive charm, the all-alluring power, and as the mind and heart of the worshipper expand and rise, form after form breaks away from Him, each successive form showing more of His radiant loveliness, until He stands as manifest Lord of all, and the devotee made one with Him becomes one with the Supreme.

Limited as we are at present, every conception of God we form is limited, inadequate, even grotesque in its imperfection. Well may we try in gentlest reverence to improve and purify conceptions lower and cruder than our own, recognising that our own must be equally low and crude in the sight of those beyond us, however inspiring they may be to us at our less developed stage. Let us worship the highest we can dream in our purest moments and strive to live the beauty we adore. Worship and life reveal God above us, because they waken the powers of God within us. Man becomes that which he worships and lives, and when the twain become one in Nirvâna the Quest is over, the spark has become the Flame.

ANNIE BESANT.

—*The Theosophical Review.*

O God! If I serve Thee for fear of hell, then burn me in hell; and if I serve Thee in hope of heaven, then forbid me heaven; but if I serve Thee for Thine own Sake, of Thy Grace withhold not from me Thine Eternal Beauty.

Sufi Wisdom.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTIONS OF RELIGION.

[Lecture delivered by Miss Lilian Edger, M.A., on July 15th, 1897, in the Protestant Hall, Sydney.]

THE position of the Theosophical Society with regard to religion is a matter which has been again and again explained to the public, and which is nevertheless constantly misunderstood, questions being frequently asked as to what this new religion or new creed may be, in what respects it is superior to Christianity, and what are the special tenets of this faith. Such a hold has the spirit of sectarianism gained on the minds of people that they seem unable to understand that any society of sane persons can concern themselves with religion without identifying themselves with some already existing sect, or else making a new one of their own. And yet this is actually the case. The Society has for one of its objects a thorough investigation into religion itself, not into any one particular sect, but into the broad principles of all. It is thus opposed to no sect, to no religion, and it shows favour to none. It is in sympathy with all, and its object is to gain a fuller and deeper insight into religious truth. This can be done most readily by a comparative study of all the different religious systems, gathering from each all that is true, pure, good, and ennobling, and from that building up a rule of life, a high standard of morality by which we should try to live. This serves the further purpose of increasing tolerance, brotherhood, and charity, by showing how, beneath the varieties of form, ceremonial and creed, there is a similarity of the essential principles, which can be explained only by the hypothesis that all have come from a common source.

We might compare the different religious systems with a number of streamlets of water flowing from a mountain side, and in their course gradually separating more and more widely from one another. Each separate stream, if taken at a considerable distance from the source, will partake largely of the characteristics of the soil through which it has been flowing. If it has flowed through a calcareous strata, its waters will be saturated with lime ; if through a soil impregnated with iron, then its waters will be infused with iron ; and so on, according to the character of the soil through which it has percolated. Thus we should find that no two of these rivulets, if taken at a distance from their source, would be alike in character, and there would be nothing to indicate that they had come from the same spring. But if we traced them back towards their

source, then the peculiarities that were derived from the soil would gradually disappear, until when we had traced them back to the common source we should find the same water in all. Or if instead of this, we were to subject the water of all the streamlets to a careful chemical analysis, then we should find that after putting on one side the local peculiarities we should have in all the same water, of which the quality would depend solely on the spring from which it came. Just so with our religious systems ; they are various streams that have come from one source. From that source they have flowed down, streams of truth, pure in themselves, though containing each a part only of the whole truth. But as they have come down through the ages they have gathered up impurities ; man-made thoughts have mingled with the Divine truths, which are the basis of them all. So we find, if we compare them, that there are many differences amongst them, due to the peculiarities or prejudices of the nations among whom they have prevailed. These are for the most part of human origin and we can find the fundamental principles on which all alike rest, either by a careful comparison of one with another, discarding the chief elements of difference, or else by tracing one of them back to its source as far as we are able, so as to discover the inner spirit which underlies it ; for we have, as a rule, gone away from the real spirit of our religion, and become entangled in the forms, ceremonies, and creeds which have grown up round it.

I have seen religion defined as that which binds man to God, and though this definition may perhaps seem not to be sufficiently comprehensive, yet it strikes the keynote, and suggests to us that there are three fundamental conceptions on which all religions must rest : God, man, and the relation which man holds towards God. In proportion as these three conceptions are true, pure, and lofty in character, so will the religion be ennobling in its influence. Whereas, if any one of them be of a low, inadequate character, the religion will be correspondingly lacking in higher influences, and may in all probability have a more or less degrading effect on those who profess it.

There is a very beautiful tradition that in the far back ages, when humanity was in its infancy, and but just beginning to be able to think, the gods came down to dwell on earth, that they might teach to men the elements of civilization and religion. Some may no doubt regard this as mere tradition and superstition but a tradition so widespread as this could hardly have grown up

without some foundation, and though opinions may differ as to what is meant here by the gods, there can be little doubt that there were in the distant past Divine teachers who came to earth to teach man the elements of civilization and religion. When they wished to convey some conception of God, they no doubt found that there was great difficulty in bringing so abstract an idea forward in a way which could be understood by infant humanity, so they used the symbols which were the most apt and striking. As it was from the sun that all force, energy, and life were derived, and without it all would be dark and blank, so it seemed a fitting symbol to show men that God was the source of all life and being, and they taught men to reverence and even worship the sun in that sense. But just as it has since been with ourselves in similar matters, the esoteric teaching became more and more hidden, and the masses of this infant humanity confounded the symbol with the reality, so that there grew up by degrees a direct worship of the sun, as being itself Deity. Possibly it may have been the desire to check this tendency that helped in the evolution of Pantheistic thought. For we can readily understand that the Divine teachers may have taught humanity that there was something of God in every form that exists in Nature, from the tiniest speck of dust to the most beautifully formed flower, and that therefore they must not identify God with any one of these forms, for God was absolute and infinite, and even so fitting a symbol as the sun could be but a poor and imperfect expression of Him. But the Pantheistic thought was in many cases degraded, and the more ignorant began to think that there was in every force of Nature and in every form a separate God, and so a system of Polytheistic thought grew up. The later teachers had to correct this view, teaching that there was but one God, not many; and we find this idea very strongly emphasized in the Jewish Scriptures. But in their gropings after the unknown men fell into another mistake, and instead of remembering that God was Infinite, Eternal, and Absolute, they anthropomorphized and limited Him, and made of Him a personal God, having qualities and attributes that were human, though conceived as possessed by God to a far higher degree than by man. Efforts were made to check this tendency also, partly by the Gnostic school, to which Jesus of Nazareth belonged. He had to work amongst the Jews, using the material that was there to His hand. He could not at once transform the whole thought of the less advanced Jews, so

though He gave many hints of the infinity of God as opposed to the limitations of personality, He yet, in dealing with the mass of the people, usually took the prevalent idea of the personal God, and tried to work from that, raising it, and infusing higher elements into it, laying less stress on the lower or human aspect, and emphasizing the higher or Divine. And so little by little the Divine teachers had to correct and develop the ideal that humanity was slowly and painfully evolving. For every time the teacher could but give men the foundation, the first hints of knowledge, leaving, these for them to add to and work out for themselves. All their knowledge had to be gained by themselves, not simply given to them by their teachers, and hence the many mistakes that were made, the many imperfect and inaccurate conceptions that were formed. Even to our own time this thought of the personal Infinite God has persisted in Christendom, though in other religions it seems never to have taken so strong a hold. But when science came into the field there was put before man a problem to solve. The popular notion in Christendom had been that God had created the world out of nothing, but science teaches us that from nothing only nothing can come and hence we must amend our ideas as to "creation," and we are led back to the Pantheistic thought that the whole universe is a part of the Infinite, that Nature is the manifestation and expression of God. We can see that Pantheism, Polytheism, and Monotheism are but different expressions of the truth that "God is all, and in all"; all three are really endeavours to express the oneness of the universe and the Infinity of Deity, though all have alike been perverted and misunderstood. And the Theosophical idea, which is rapidly gaining ground, is leading to a gradual elimination of the narrow, personal conception of Deity, and a return to the grander and more comprehensive one that we find in the Eastern philosophy. The experience humanity has passed through in reaching this point has not been lost; it is only through exploded misconceptions that the truth can be reached, just as it is only by contact with evil that good can be understood. There is still strong opposition to this conception of Deity. It is by some regarded as nothing less than Atheism in a different form. But it is at times clearly expressed, and constantly hinted at in the Christian Scriptures; or if we find that our understanding of passages in them that seem to imply the personality of Infinite Deity are inconsistent with science and with reason, then either the passages are

not true, or we have misunderstood them and it is of importance that we should decide which of these alternatives is the true one. If a statement is untrue then the sooner we cast it aside the better, if we have misunderstood it then we should try to find the true meaning by comparing it with science and other religions.

If this, then, is a true conception of Deity, man must himself be an expression of Deity, very imperfect, it is true, but with unlimited possibilities of becoming less imperfect, for the real essence of man is Divine ; the personality is but a shell to be used for a time, and it is the imperfections, a lack of development of the shell, that prevent the divinity within from shining out in all its glory. There are people who say they believe that man is simply the dust of his earth, that we are all miserable sinners. We may, it is true, be saved from our sins, but there are many who will never be saved, who are doomed to eternal perdition. No doctrine has ever been taught to humanity that is more repugnant and pernicious than this. If we accept the position of being miserable sinners, mere dust of the ground, we lose our self-respect, and by failing to recognise the greatness of the ideal that lies before us and within our reach, we minimise the possibility of ever attaining it. If, on the other hand, we recognise the Divine possibilities within us, we cannot but feel that there rests upon us a duty and responsibility which impels us to exert our utmost efforts to follow in the path that leads to their realization. And this path is one of willing obedience to the law ; and the first aspect of the law that we learn to recognise is that if we do wrong, suffering will follow, and if right, then the result will be contentment, happiness, and peace. We next learn that it is not only *doing* that leads to these results ; that if we *will* to be pure and good, and strive to cultivate right *thought*, then even though our efforts to translate that thought into action may be checked, the force of the honest and intense thought will cause our characters to grow in purity and strength.

Then let us strive to see, each in his own religion, what there is that will help us, that will intensify our reverence for that Power behind and in the Universe, and our recognition of the divine possibilities within ourselves, encouraging and helping us to develop these possibilities, and thus to rise ever onward, ever upward, nearer to that Divinity which is the very source of our being.

—*Theosophy in Australia.*

THE SECRET OF POWER.

THE possession of power in man is manifested by certain unerring signs that fit to any occasion whether of action or repose, and make both action and restraint, speech or silence fitting and sufficient. We say of such, "he is the man for the time, or the place." If we notice the signs of power only on great occasions, and if they are suddenly revealed in one in whom their existence had been unsuspected, the problem is not altered. Circumstances can only serve to bring into action that which already existed within. Circumstances never create heroism ; though they may give opportunity for its manifestation.

That man or woman who knows how to do the right thing, at the right time and place, and in the right way, is possessed of real power. Knowledge of the proper time for action, and the ability to act at that time, and in the most appropriate manner, with sufficient force and no more, pre-supposes also the ability to restrain action until that time, and to measure the energy required at that time with exactness. Will, power, judgment and self-restraint enter into all wise and efficient action.

In this measure of power, silence and inaction often manifest will-power in the highest degree, and the ability to wait patiently and serenely the appointed hour springs only from real knowledge.

To be able at any time to exercise or to subordinate the centres of action to the judgment and the will is the secret of power, and this is the result of self-discipline, or cultivation.

It is true that certain individuals seemingly possess this secret of power as a natural endowment, independent of cultivation, and that it is supposed to be the result of heredity and not of self-discipline. This, however, is altogether an illusion. That power should in one instance be demonstrably the result of painstaking endeavour and severe self-discipline requiring a lifetime for its development, and that in another case it should be a gift altogether gratuitous would be so contradictory and so manifestly unjust as to be absolutely untenable.

When however, reincarnation is admitted as a factor in all human development it can at once be seen that self-conquest applies in every case, and that in any case power is only so won, while heredity is given not only its full value in individual development, but it is readily understood why like egos belong to the same group, and why exceptions in

hereditary traits also occur. Heredity fails to explain the secret of power, because of the many exceptions which prove the contrary. Reincarnation explains the secret of power and explains heredity also.

If, therefore, power is seen to be due to self-discipline in the growth of an individual in the present life, we are justified in concluding that where it appears seemingly spontaneous in one who has not been schooled in self-restraint it is the result of evolution in a former existence. In other words, if power depends upon self-restraint and is only so derived through the years of experience we are justified in concluding that it never comes in any other way, and it is far more logical to assume previous experience than to annul the law so clearly demonstrated and so universally operative as far as observation and experience go.

Now what is the meaning of self-discipline that broadens knowledge, deepens intelligence, quickens the perceptions, strengthens the will and is, therefore, the secret of power? How may one proceed who desires to possess power?

The point of attack is the emotions and feelings. The perturbations produced by the emotions and feelings in the field of consciousness are like the waves produced by the wind on the surface of a clear lake. Instead of one broad clear expanse reflecting like a mirror all objects above and around in its clear depths, the lake is in constant motion and its surface is broken by a thousand waves with divergent planes reflecting only broken and distorted images.

The consciousness of man is like the lake ; the passions are the winds that blow ; the emotions and feelings are the waves, and the broken and distorted images are the illusions of sense and time, that crowd out the permanent and the true.

In order to act with judgment and discrimination, or to withhold action wisely one must see things as they are, and must be able to entirely eliminate the personal equation. He must be able to look events and circumstances squarely in the face and, for the time, dissociate them from himself entirely. He will thus approach the "thing in itself," and be able to estimate it at its true value.

Such a course of self-discipline is difficult to maintain, but it has not only to be persisted in, it must become automatic or habitual. It is achieved only by the few, because the many either do not think it desirable, or are unwilling to pay the price of freedom and power, wisdom and nobility of character.

It is so easy for most people to talk when they have no-

thing to say. It is so easy to act from impulse or excitement when we have no motive for action, just as easy as for the clear surface of the lake to be broken into ripples by any wind that blows, or into howling waves by a tornado. It is so easy to comment on the actions of others, to criticise their motives and assail their character when the whole subject is really none of our business, and we really know little or nothing about it. It is thus that we weaken and deprave our own character, and injure others for lack of a little self-restraint and sincere honesty. It is thus that our words and actions lose all power for good, and fail to carry weight or manifest power, except for mischief and evil.

All such conduct is, in the first place, uncharitable ; such as we do not like to have others exercise towards us. In one word, it is *unbrotherly*. The foundation of the building of character is ethical. It is the motive that determines action. If we really desire not only not to injure others but really to benefit them all we can, we shall find here a sufficient motive for self-restraint and discipline. This is the reason so much stress is laid on the principle of Brotherhood in the T. S. It is the solid rock upon which all ethics rest, the one true and everlasting test of conduct, and while it benefits the world and elevates humanity as nothing else can, it is, at the same time, the only means of progress, and the final test of power with every individual.

This basis of ethics is, in the first place, a matter of sentiment born in the realm of feeling, the fruit of human sympathy. It is wise, therefore, to create a universal sentiment of Brotherhood, for only so can the attention of the thoughtless, the indifferent, and the selfish be challenged, and held. But let no one imagine that Brotherhood is *merely a sentiment*. A great deal is gained when the sentiment becomes habitual, and even where the practice of the individual contradicts the sentiment, such an individual is not worse, but better for the sentiment. He who admires the sentiment and tries, however feebly, to act upon it, is bettered by just so much endeavour, though he fail in living up to it habitually.

Beyond the sentimental and the purely ethical basis of self-discipline, there is the metaphysical, the philosophical, and finally the scientific.

In conquering the passions and learning to control the emotions and feelings, there occur certain physical and physiological changes in the human organism on the well-known principle that structure and function develop *pari passu* by

exercise. Hence, the restraint, or nonuse of an organ or a function tends to atrophy. The emotional realm (the sensory ganglia), dominant in the animal and in animal man, will lose control and be replaced by the higher function of judgment, intelligence and will. No longer the slave of the passions and emotions, man by self-discipline will become their master.

Now by referring to the illustration of the clear and placid lake as representing the consciousness of man when undisturbed by the waves of passion, we may contrast the ripple, that dash, and the roar of waves, with the utter silence of the placid lake when undisturbed. In one case the lake itself is noisy, in the other silence reigns. Here is a complete change of vibration. It is the action of the wind upon the lake that makes the noise. When there is no wind the lake is noiseless, and remember it is the passions, feelings and emotions that represent the wind. Now, clear the consciousness of man from these, that is, lay them to rest and this consciousness becomes a mirror for reflecting faithfully real images, and at the same time a sounding board for all outer vibrations. One can easily test this by the echoes so readily heard on the clear lake and inaudible when the lake is disturbed.

When, therefore, the consciousness of man is habitually held calm and serene, only true reflections are presented to the ego, and these can be examined leisurely and dispassionately. These being *true* and taken as the basis of knowledge and action, such action will be powerful and far-reaching.

The law of use and development as applied to individual organs so long familiar to physiologists is sure to govern in broader areas of development, and to apply equally to the organism as a whole in its relation to the ego.

Self-discipline, self-development, and final mastery of man over his own organism, functions, faculties, and environment, may thus be seen to rest on well-ascertained laws of physics and physiology, and the achievement of power is the higher evolution of man.

Many persons make the mistake of supposing that self-mastery as herein outlined would kill out all feeling, sentiment and emotion, and convert man into an intellectual automaton. Is there then no difference between controlling and killing? Cannot one be pleased or amused without giving vent to roaring laughter like a clown or an imbecile? Cannot one appreciate beauty or loveliness without an insane frenzy to devour or to destroy? Self-mastery teaches one how to appreciate both beauty and ugliness, loveliness and deformity,

virtue and vice, at their true value. It also teaches one to discern beneath the less perfect and the more perfect alike, the *one life*, the *one intelligence*, the *one love* that pervades the universe. It is the ability to discern this, and the action that is based upon it that is the secret of power.

The motive of all effort and the aim of evolution is to constitute man a self-conscious centre of power and a co-worker for the uplifting of humanity. If the foregoing considerations seem lacking in force or clearness we have only to consider the effect of allowing the passions, feelings and emotions to have full sway, to run riot, and dominate the individual. Hysteria, melancholia, or "emotional insanity", is the result, and there are in every community many such individuals who are practically insane, and who barely escape the madhouse. Many more are weak almost to imbecility, and to these must be added the criminal classes.

The lower nature must be dominated by intelligence and the moral sense, and self-restraint must be supplemented by right action in order to develop real power, and this means control of the emotions, subjugation of the passions, and elevation of the aims of the individual. This is synonymous with the higher evolution of man, and the end is human perfection.

If every child were taught self-restraint and habitual kindness to others from infancy, thus rooting out selfishness, it would be of far more value than anything else that so-called "education" could bestow, and we might presently see a near solution of all social problems, and a race of not only powerful, but humane men and women.

J. D. BUCK.

—*Universal Brotherhood.*

Mind is a battery which discharges its forces for good or for evil. People imagine money a necessity for doing good to others. But we can always bless and that costs us nothing; nay—if we develop the habit of blessing we help those we bless materially and make our own spiritual advance. Why should we not try this course then? It costs nothing, not even a very serious effort. *The blessing of course must come from the heart.*

P. B. N. in

Prasnotara.

EVOLUTION AND REINCARNATION.

(Concluded from page 154.)

Centres of consciousness are never absolutely separated. There are merely greater and lesser degrees of affinity. The universe in the ultimate is one. There is differentiation but not separation. To illustrate crudely. Each centre of consciousness is united to every other centre of consciousness by threads that stretch infinitely and pass through each other.

When a higher centre of consciousness comes into physical manifestation it draws in the threads of lower centres of consciousness and forms itself as already described. When disintegration takes place the threads are let loose. This is what is meant in the opening quotation where it is said : "The spark hangs from the flame by the finest thread of Fohat." Fohat is force or cosmic will.

States of consciousness may be differentiated as follows : The crystal may be said to live, though some of the higher ones may be said to live and vegetate. Plants live and vegetate or function, and some higher ones may be said to feel. Animals live, vegetate, feel, cognize, and some of the higher ones may be said to cogitate. Mankind live, function, feel, cognize, cogitate, and reflect upon the purposes of their own existence. This last may be called the intellectual or ratiocinative faculty, the mind ; which is divided into the higher and lower. There are two states of consciousness beyond these—the Soul and Spirit : the intuitive and divine consciousness ; but these are latent in normal humanity. This explains how it is possible for one to analyze his own consciousness. Although a centre of consciousness cannot perceive itself, the mind and higher states of consciousness can perceive all below themselves.

There are seven states of matter which may be named the solid, liquid, gaseous, radiant, etheric, atomic and akasic. Each state of consciousness seems to have some sort of relation to a particular condition of matter. Thus the mineral consciousness is related to the solid, the vegetable to the liquid, the animal to the gaseous, the intellectual to the radiant, the higher mind to the etheric, the mental-psychic to the atomic and the psychic to the akasic.

The radiant state of matter is cognizable by normal humanity. Men who have developed the higher mental consciousness are called clairvoyant and can perceive the forms of life pertaining to the etheric state of matter. They are called

elementals and mineral noumena ascending or descending to higher or lower planes. Higher states of consciousness can cognize higher states of matter, and can see the states of consciousness existing in them. There the process of reincarnation can be directly observed. It is said that higher states of consciousness can be attained simply by a concentrated determination to get there. The universal human desire for positive self-consciousness in higher states of matter after death is the very force which makes that self-conscious existence after death possible. This is perfectly reasonable. Every one knows that desire is a force, and every one knows that there are higher states of matter. Now that desire-force—no matter how small it may be—if it acts constantly for a certain purpose, that purpose, unless it is infinite—must ultimately be accomplished.

Each desire for self-consciousness on higher planes is a step towards that end, and if the desire is continued, self-consciousness on higher planes must, in a longer or shorter time, be attained. But those who have already acquired the power to pass at will from plane to plane advise all who desire to reach higher planes to make themselves intellectually acquainted with the possibilities and laws of those planes before attempting to reach them. There are, they tell us, many dangers to be encountered. The power for good or evil being immensely greater, one entering upon higher planes, ignorant of their laws, is almost sure to bring immense trouble upon his own head. The surest preparation is to live according to the highest principles of ethics, and to cultivate an earnest endeavour to get at the truth of all things, and to get rid of all fear. To reach these higher states of consciousness is what Christ meant by his doctrine of regeneration, or being born again.

Wm. Scott.

—*The Lamp.*

By an oversight the above portion of this article was omitted in our last number, Ed.

When passions rage within, maintain a perfect calm without. When spoken the energy is lost. By keeping silent you gain mastery over yourself.

P. B. N. in

Prasnotara.

Notes and News.

“THE Seeking of the Self” and “the Functions of the Gods” are the titles of two remarkable lectures recently delivered by Mrs. Besant at the London Head-quarters. The *Vahan* in briefly noticing them says, “It is difficult to say which of these was most full of information and of suggestion. In the former Mrs. Besant began by explaining and limiting for the sake of clearness the word Self; and told her hearers that although there is the supreme Logos, the one existence He is not the Self who is the goal of our present evolution. Coming much farther down there is the Logos of our solar system, a system of seven Planetary chains, and He is not at present the Self for us. The utmost we can do is to look to the Logos of our own Planetary chain as our goal. Mrs. Besant then explained that the finding of the Self means the attuning of our consciousness to His, so that when our chain shall have accomplished its evolution and its Logos withdraws all things into Himself, we shall be able to hold our consciousness in the midst of these tremendously rapid vibrations instead of being swept into oblivion; and at the appointed time come forth again with the memory of all that has gone before.

“THE Functions of the Gods”^{**} may almost be said to have been a continuation of that just referred to, so much did one help to illuminate the other. We were reminded that the word “God” in its fullest sense applies only to the one Existence which can but be named, but that below It all old religions have taught the existence of a great hierarchy of beings, to whom the name Devas or Gods has been given—beings who in their various grades have each there place and work and exist for the carrying out of the will of the Logos. Mrs. Besant then went on to tell something of the greater and the lesser Gods beginning with the Logos of our own Planetary evolution.

BRO. T. S. GANPATI AIYAR, who was some time ago connected with the Bombay Branch and latterly with the Head-Quarters staff at Adyar, has been appointed Assistant Secretary of the Indian Section at Benares in place of Babu Kirtichandra Roy. The appointment is in every respect very desirable, Bro. Ganpati being a devoted and earnest worker in the Theosophic cause.